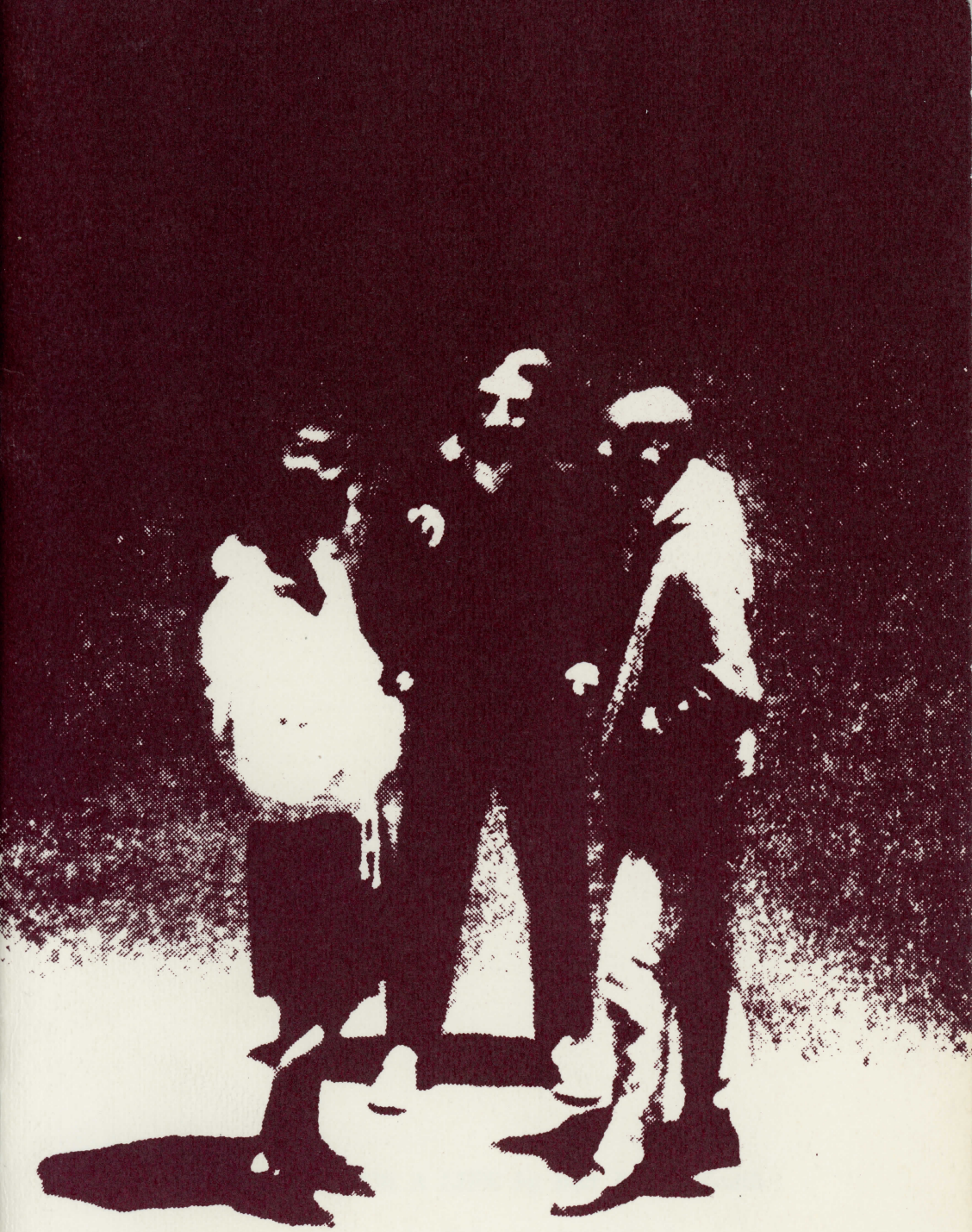

CHANCE FOR A LIFE

Report of a Study on Juvenile Delinquency

CHANCE FOR A LIFE *by* Bert Kruger Smith

PREFACE by *Robert L. Sutherland*

APPENDIX by *Mrs. Christopher Morris*

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The Junior League's Public Affairs Study Committee, of course, provided the main impetus for the pamphlet. Throughout their study they have been eager to see their findings implemented in meaningful ways.

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Bert Kruger Smith

PREFACE

Volunteer efforts have, in the past decade, risen to new levels of endeavor. Perhaps the epitome is achieved when a highly competent national organization encourages a volunteer group to make a survey. That is what happened in 1961 when members of the Public Affairs Study Committee of the Junior Leagues of Texas approached staff persons in the National Council on Crime and Delinquency for suggestions about a possible project. A total survey of all Texas counties to discover what juvenile services were available was proposed. Results, as the pamphlet shows, may well serve as the basis for widespread citizen action.

Chance for a Life tells the story of a need in Texas. Also, it dramatizes the manner in which volunteers may help to fill the manpower gap in the mental health field.

Delineation of a problem is only the first step towards its solution. Members of the Junior League's Public Affairs Study Committee are taking the second step by publicizing their findings. A film entitled *A Theft of Tomorrows* has been produced and is being shown throughout the state. *Chance for a Life* will accompany many of the film showings. Members of the League have studied techniques of group discussion in order that they can work effectively with many organizations.

Earlier efforts by the Public Affairs Study Committee resulted in a film entitled "Christina's Doll" and two pamphlets, "No Place for Tommy" and "Children of the Evening." Other benefits came in increased public understanding of the needs of emotionally disturbed children. Legislation followed this awakening of interest.

The help of staff members of the regional office of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, the involvement of the Hogg Foundation, and the efforts of the Junior League volunteers demonstrate an interesting pattern of national, state, and local commitment to a problem area. At each level, voluntary citizens' organizations took the lead. It is our hope that there will be a broad response to the needs of juvenile offenders.

Robert L. Sutherland, Director
Hogg Foundation for Mental Health

INTRODUCTION

A delinquent child. To the statistician, he may be a figure on a table of percentages. A dot on a map or a line on a graph. To the juvenile judge he may be a defiant youngster standing restlessly before the bench. To the probation officer he may symbolize a family with problems. To the concerned citizen, he is a youngster in need of help.

Although means of handling the delinquent children vary widely from state to state, in Texas there is often great variation from county to county. As members of the Junior League Public Affairs Study Committee criss-crossed the state, talking with judges, probation officers, and law enforcement officials, they learned much about the disparity of handling juvenile offenders. Where one lives, rather than what one does, often determines what action the court will take.

The attitudes of the judges in different counties may be poles apart. One reported that "all children under 12 who are proven delinquent should be taken from their parents; juvenile offenders should be jailed over weekends; the age limit should be lowered."

Another judge, on his own time, goes into homes to work with youngsters and their families in an effort to prevent further delinquency.

These examples are only two of many from a two-year study which members of the Junior League Public Affairs Study Committee made throughout the State of Texas. The story of the study is, in itself, an example of how much can be accomplished when an alert citizens' group takes action. How the survey proceeded is described in the Appendix by one of the chief planners and participants, Mrs. Christopher Morris. She served as state chairman of the study and maintained the momentum of the workers until the final reports were in and the film, *A Theft of Tomorrows*, was completed. Mrs. Robert T. Rylee, II, current state chairman carries through the work already begun.

Chance for a Life dramatizes and summarizes many of the findings from the survey.

CHANCE FOR A LIFE

PART I

CHANCE SEEMS TO PLAY SOME ROLE IN THE life of every person. Happy coincidences, near-tragic encounters, and actual grief-producing situations often come about through apparently freak circumstances. The Miller family of Winbury Circle can attest to this fact. In some instances, as in treatment of juvenile delinquents in Texas, "chance" of geographical location may be far more important for the young people than the crime committed.

Let us see how each of these contingencies might occur.

It is dark tonight at Winbury Circle, except for the light in the front bedroom of the Miller home where young Mark lies pained with a bad sore throat. His brother, Tommy, is spending the night with a friend down the street in order to avoid sleeping with Mark and subjecting himself to contagion.

Hours ago the neighborhood children stopped playing tag, parked their bicycles, and trotted homeward. The older youngsters have finished schoolwork, returned from basketball practice or coke dates and are asleep; even the parents have finally turned off the television sets and gone to bed. Each house, the Hildebrands' pink stucco, the white frame bungalow of the Millers, the two-story colonial house of the Spences, and the Johnsons' ranch style is whisper-quiet.

Suddenly, wildly, the Circle echoes with the screeching of brakes, the crashing of metal against wood, the shredding of tires and trees and windows as a car goes out of control, pierces the Miller home in the heart of Winbury Circle, and kills Mark Miller.

Chance forfeited Mark's life, saved Tommy's.

It is dark tonight in X-town, Texas. Hal Robbins and a trio of friends are on their way home from a school dance. They argue over the route to take, the comparative power of a Thunderbird and a Corvette, the amount of beer a guy can hold. They talk about everything except what really bothers them, the fact that they were misfits at the dance, and they knew it. They don't seem to belong anywhere at this new high school, and they

are unhappy with themselves.

Someone gets the idea of climbing to the roof of the nearby grocery and seeing if they can pry the skylight. They brag, talk excitedly, become afraid, gather up courage—and before the hour is up are involved in a burglary and are caught.

Hal spends the night in jail and eventually is sent to a state training school.

If Hal had lived in Y-town, Texas, which boasts juvenile detention facilities, juvenile court, and good probation services, he might have had far different treatment and a vastly different future.

Chance again forfeited a life. Caprice of geography jailed Hal instead of helping him grow into acceptable manhood.

Any effort to specify causes of delinquency or to show who may become delinquent would oversimplify the problem. In some instances the youngster is "conforming" to the rules of his gang. In others the behavior may show itself in continuing revolt against authority. And in still other instances the young person's character problem has built up over years of inadequate and faulty handling of difficulties by the child and his family.

Hal Robbins might demonstrate the first kind of delinquency. Unaccepted at the dance, he needed approval from someone. Hal and his friends live in the "low town" district. Most of their fathers do day labor and many of their mothers who also hold some kind of job during the daytime spend their evening hours in an endless series of plodding chores. Hal does not belong with the athletes or the students. He is mediocre in both groups. Only with "his" gang does he find acceptance and prestige and the joy of belonging.

But what about another kind of delinquency? Let's take Steve Fillmore for example.

"Steve Fillmore arrested for assault?"

"The Fillmores always have had trouble with that boy."

"You'd think he'd have known better than to touch a policeman."

News of Steve Fillmore's arrest clicked through the telephone wires of Midville; was discussed beside the produce and the bread rack at the grocery store; was written in numerous letters which went out from Midville; was even whispered in the back pews of the church.

Steve Fillmore—Doctor Fillmore's son.

"I always knew those dark good looks of his would get him in trouble."

"If his mother had spent less time being a hospital volunteer and more time being a mother, he'd have gone straight."

"It was Sally's folks that caused it. They wouldn't let him date her after the two of them got so serious."

Causes of Steve Fillmore's troubles were discussed frequently. Steve himself, brooding in his bedroom at home, might have supplied part of

the answer, though even he could not have told what made his anger boil with hate when the policeman stopped him and began to lecture.

A knowing case worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist might have guessed that Steve was headed for trouble when, in his subteens, he defied the school authorities and planted smoke bombs in the school building; or when he took "pep pills" from his father's medical supply and peddled them on the school grounds.

Someone skilled in studying human behavior might have been able to help divert the gathering stream of rebellion into calmer waters of semi-conformity or even into genuine creativity. Harsh authority had been a part of Steve's life from his babyhood, and his rebellion gathered force.

Steve Fillmore might characterize the second kind of delinquent. His revolt is constant, though most of the time it rumbles underground like an earthquake which has not yet split the surface. He is more likely to commit acts against persons than against property.

Steve and Hal could be reversed so far as their family backgrounds are concerned. Much emotionally pathological behavior occurs in low income families as well as middle and upper-income groups. *However, what is important is that appropriate help, not just punishment, be offered to all delinquents.*

The third instance of delinquency is that of the individual who seems to have an almost complete absence of conscience, and who does not adjust well to most situations. Marie Jones might be such a person, differing from Hal in that she is not working for group approval, and also varying from Steve because she is not rebelling against constant aggressive authority. Rather, lovely, liquid-eyed Marie has been able to use her beauty as a master key which opens doors to every place she wants to be. As a tiny child she could wheedle candy or rides from any adult simply by swishing her dark curls and smiling until her dimple showed. Her parents might have protested, but they did not. There seemed to be a silent conspiracy to enjoy the wiles and even tantrums of this miniature Helen of Troy. Little girl wiles became big-girl wildness; before Marie was 16, her sexual promiscuity was a much-discussed topic.

Marie's type of delinquency can occur in any social class setting. Some of it emerges, authorities believe, because of the satisfaction which the parents may get subconsciously from the actions. To aid Marie significantly, someone has to help the parents understand their own contribution to the behavior. Marie may need prolonged assistance to change her attitudes and her actions.

Because types of delinquency differ and the causes behind behavior vary also, no one kind of intervention can be successful in all instances. Hal, Steve, and Marie. On the books they may be labeled "delinquents" and lumped together as just three more cases on the record book. But each of them is individual, with different needs and expectations and varying

reasons for his behavior. Complex resources will have to be called into play to help return these three, and the many like them, to acceptable ways of life. Detention may remove the youngsters. It will not in itself obliterate the causes for their actions.

PART II

IF, THEN, CAUSES OF JUVENILE DELINQUENCY are multiple, methods of handling it are diverse, and needs are many, what is a concerned citizen to do?

This question spurred members of the Public Affairs Study Committee of the Junior Leagues of Texas to ask for assistance from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency in 1961. Together they formed a plan for the 30 volunteers of the ten Public Affairs Study Committees to make a careful inventory of services available to children in each of the 254 counties of Texas. The eight chief recommendations detailed in this section are those which emerged from the two-and-a-half years of study and compilation.

Diversity makes Texas interesting geographically. The South where the Gulf dips into the mainland; the thick Piney Woods in the Eastern portion of the state; the elephant-back mountains in the West and the red plains of North Texas are all unique, different, intriguing.

Diversity in services for Texas people spells confusion and problems. On a checkerboard of varying programs, a youngster may be punished more by where he lives than by what he does. Place of residence may determine whether he will be given help toward productive citizenship or be carried downward by the cumulative force of unhalted delinquent patterns.

For instance, let's visit the Winters family in Circle, Texas.

Circle is a quiet town 70 miles from the city of Farmer's Point. Once the hub of the West Texas farming area, Circle now is eroding like the much-used soil around the county. The dust storms and nearby industry drew out the top soil and the young people, and now there is nothing left but the too-old and the very-young, each waiting for a different type of release.

Although Circle is a county seat, it has no provisions for juvenile courts

or probation officers. Judge Williams, tired now and overworked, has neither energy nor time to follow through on all cases of juvenile offenses. . . . But then we were talking of the Winters family. A nice family. Lived in the two-story white frame house near the high school for three generations. All of the men good mechanics. In fact, you wouldn't start on a trip without letting "Old Man" Winters check your car engine. And his boy, well, there was a youngster for you. A mechanic from the time he could toddle. Great with his hands. If a car wouldn't run after he had worked on it, it wasn't worth keeping. Except for a temper quick as a gale wind, he was a nice fellow, that is until his 13th year, the autumn of his upheaval. That grim, ugly autumn when fall winds kept blowing away the summer land and uncovered the naked earth. Mrs. Winters died. Sick three days and dead. And the house took on a closed look, as if it were now unlived in. There was hardly time for a boy to get accustomed to his jolting new height and his vast emptiness when Pa brought in a new woman to take his mother's place.

That is when "Stormy" Winters really earned his nickname. He was stopped for speeding and knocked down a policeman. He became a legend with the law. First it was a smash-up with a parked car on First Street. And then it was a ticket for driving too fast. There were rumors of a theft from the teachers' lounge, and before long "Stormy" was in the local jail and then in a state training school.

Suppose, just suppose, that the Winters family had not stayed in Circle. What if they had left with their cousins six years ago and had gone to the Coast, to Gulftown. Gulftown boasts some of the finest facilities in the country for the care of juvenile offenders. There is that outstanding juvenile court, a judge who knows and understands children, probation officers and caseworkers, and a detention home for young people.

What would have happened to "Stormy" in Gulftown? The first offense, the intial lashing out at authority, would have been a clue. A caseworker might have been assigned to supervise "Stormy," to learn about his family and his problems and his needs. A careful prehearing report would have been supplied to the judge before "Stormy" ever came before him.

Perhaps, even with careful supervision, "Stormy" would not have stopped with one offense. He might have gone on to perform increasingly serious acts. But then, instead of the local jail (where he might be exposed to alcoholism, dope addition, perverted sex behavior), "Stormy" would have been detained in the juvenile center. There he would have been held with other young people; his father and foster mother might have been called in for interviews; "Stormy" could have talked through many of his problems in private or in group discussions. And, finally, he might have been returned to his home under the watchful care of a probation officer, or he could have gone to a foster home, a boys' ranch, or some other institution which could have provided protection for his own destructive feelings at

the same time that it protected the community from his anti-social behavior.

"Stormy" Winters, criminal. Or "Stormy" Winters, a young man with a chance to become a productive adult? The answer could be geographical rather than sociological.

PART III

WHAT IS THE SITUATION CONCERNING JUVENILE delinquency in Texas? The members of the Junior League's Public Affairs Study Committee found some interesting answers to that question. Aided by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, the Child Welfare Division of the Texas Department of Public Welfare, the Board of Pardons and Paroles, and the Office of Mental Health Planning, they were able to visit and obtain information from 206 of Texas' 254 counties, containing 88.3 per cent of the population of Texas.

The chief finding from the 15-inch high report was this: Cooperative efforts can bring about improved conditions for dealing with juvenile delinquents in the state. This cooperation is needed between volunteers and agency professionals; between public and private organizations; between all of the law enforcement officers of the state. Most important, the interest and cooperation of the informed citizen can help institute reforms.

Although numerous suggestions and findings appeared in the individual reports, eight main recommendations showed up with a frequency that patterned the entire study.[1]

1. *Each local law enforcement agency should have either a juvenile bureau or division composed as nearly as possible of five per cent of the force or should have one or more officers or deputies to handle cases involving juveniles.*

As we have learned from "Stormy," a young person's initial contact with the law can have a profound and lasting impression on his future. The police officer who can work with young persons must, first of all, be a good law enforcement officer. Then, beyond that, he needs to understand the

[1] *What to Do About Delinquency in Texas: The Implications of a Factual Study.* Austin, Texas: The Texas Council on Crime and Delinquency, p. 11.

juvenile court processes and the functions of the social agencies in the area.

The special training needed for such work is being provided increasingly through universities and colleges. In some instances, funds are available to help officers take this extra study.

Since the first apprehension may well color a young person's attitude toward himself and the law, the implementation of the plan for having a juvenile bureau or division becomes imperative.

Nationally, 41 per cent of all communities over 10,000 in the United States have special juvenile law enforcement services. In Texas only 24, or 15.8 per cent of the police departments, have special juvenile police or deputies. This fact demonstrates an amazing disparity between what exists in Texas and what facilities there should be.

In addition to the humane interest in rehabilitation which might well spark efforts to increase the services of special juvenile law enforcement officers, an actual saving might be demonstrated in another way. With good supportive services, many young people who are apprehended are not referred to probation department or to the court. Instead, parents, other community agencies and school programs are utilized in an effort to put the youngsters back "on track."

2. *Probation services, with sufficient qualified staff, should be made available to each county in the state.*

What can good probation services mean? "Stormy" could tell you. So could his father, for with such assistance, "Stormy" might well have been diverted from his forward thrust towards a state training school. Many young people who come to the attention of probation departments may avoid legal action. In some instances the casework services of the probation department toward the child and his family may be accepted as nonjudicial cases under supervision.

Almost one out of two youths in the United States who were arrested received such nonjudicial handling in 1962. This figure, experience shows, represents an accurate accounting of need, for about one-half of the delinquency cases referred to probation departments generally require judicial action.

In Texas, in that same year, almost three out of four, 73.3 per cent of the children arrested, were handled nonjudicially. This figure might be considered good if the large percentage of youngsters were given maximum preventive care and services to aid them in their rehabilitation. However, if the figures represent (as many of them do) only services by often-overworked probation officers and volunteers, then many young Texans were probably lost by default—or chance. In a recent report, the Texas Council on Crime and Delinquency states it this way: . . . one might wonder what would have occurred if, say, 50 per cent of the children were taken before the courts. Would the authority of the court assist the treatment process, give support to parental efforts toward redirecting the child,

and offer a legal basis for probation work? These questions have not been the subject of research, but experience in courts where this practice is followed and where sound case screening is the rule has shown positive results.

Well-qualified probation officers can serve as the most important factor determining the future of a youth in trouble. They study family problems, supervise the children, utilize all of the possible resources of the community in their rehabilitation efforts. The job of a good probation officer cannot be measured on a 40-hour, five-day-a-week yardstick. It demands the best of a person's efforts, sometimes seven days a week. Despite this fact, in Texas, one hundred judges serve as probation officers in addition to their judicial duties.

The report by the Texas Council on Crime and Delinquency quotes one judge as follows:

> I try to do the probation work, but I don't have the time or the training to help these children. I had over 200 children involved in delinquent acts last year. I need a probation officer.[2]

Small counties, of course, cannot support and maintain a probation officer full-time. In such cases, it could be possible to obtain the services of a probation officer to serve several counties. Such provision is made in Texas for adult offenders in a number of judicial districts but not for juveniles. Many states use regional probation officers for juveniles.

In addition to the work with a young person after he has appeared before the judge, the probation officer serves a vital function by preparing a prehearing report, which gives complete background information about the child and may be the most important document possible in helping the judge make a decision concerning the future of this young person.

This report should be written and should be prepared in such a way that it can give full information in minimum reading time. Should the child be committed to a state agency, this report can accompany him, thus giving important facts to those people responsible for his welfare.

The Junior League members discovered that prehearing reports in Texas are mostly verbal and that some judges stated that such information was made available in only a very few cases appearing before them.

3. *Special detention facilities, not jails, should be developed for those children who must be temporarily removed from the community.*

As we saw earlier in the case of Hal Robbins, Steve Fillmore, Marie Jones, and "Stormy" Winters, delinquent acts are committed by various kinds of children and teenagers for a variety of reasons. Many youngsters must be detained for their own protection or that of others. Some of them are potential runaways and some are potentially dangerous. Others need psychological studies or have violated parole.

Where they are "detained" is as important as why. "Stormy" Winters or

[2] Op. cit., p. 15.

Hal Robbins, frightened yet defiant, might find in the city jail new "models" for anti-social acts. The fellow who held up a service station last night knows all of the tricks and can give lessons in safecracking, judo, and gun handling. He is willing to teach a young boy the "smart" way to exist, and a hostile youngster might be willing to listen.

Or, Hal and "Stormy" might find themselves in one of the outstanding county juvenile detention quarters. Here they will be "detained" just as solidly, but their "models" will be caseworkers, probation officers, staff members who are eager to understand and to help. Here life will be orderly; and there will be time and place for reflection and, hopefully, for a chance to begin to understand that strange, off-kilter mechanism which makes him jump the tracks of social acceptability and run, a driverless train, down an uncharted path.

In Texas, Junior League members discovered in about eight out of ten counties young people were detained in jails, the only detention spot available. No wonder one of the eight main recommendations lists detention homes available to every county on a regional basis as a must.

Once again, small counties which cannot maintain such facilities on their own could well combine forces with others and provide strategically-placed regional homes.

4. *Each juvenile court judge should demand throrough screening of every child prior to detention to insure that no child is detained illegally or unnecessarily.*

As can be seen, no one recommendation is exclusive of the other. All are intertwined as closely as the delinquent child, his family, and his community are bound in a common problem. Selective screening of a youngster may mean that many young people will not have to be referred to the court. Many can be aided without judicial action, and only careful study can determine which ones they are.

Figures prepared by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency show that one intake officer can screen approximately 500 cases per year. If we take as a base figure the 33,316 cases which came up for disposition in 1962, we can see that 67 intake officers would be needed to screen these children properly. Additional officers would be required for prehearing studies and supervision of those children on probation. In order to prepare prehearing reports and to supervise those young ones, 517 additional officers would be needed in 174 counties of Texas. Compare this figure with the 162 officers who were available in 192 counties, and we can see readily that much improvement will need to be made to bring Texas up to the standard required for topnotch work with youth in trouble.

5. *Training programs should be developed at the state level for persons working with delinquent children, including juvenile court judges, probation, parole, and law enforcement officers, detention and institutional personnel, and other related personnel.*

Providing improved services for juvenile delinquents and upgrading skills of those people working with them are important components of any program. This recognition was given prominently by the Governor's Conference Committee on Juvenile Delinquency[3] which made two prime recommendations:

1. In cooperation with the state's institutions of higher education, training institutes should be developed for the variety of officials and personnel required for prevention, control, and treatment services; *i.e.*, law enforcement officers, judges, and individuals in probation and aftercare, institutions, school guidance, vocational training, and guidance clinics.

2. For positions which need professionally trained persons, the state would plan with the local agencies and the universities and colleges, and should help finance special programs geared to recruit and educate a greatly increased number of men and women. It should be recognized that the development and support of a career service in this field is basic to the success of such a training program.

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency sets as a minimum standard for probation officers a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university. A master's degree in social work is, of course, preferred. In the Texas survey 84 of 111 officers met the minimum qualifications, and 28 had completed at least one year of postgraduate work. This record bears evidence to the fact that a number of the people who go into work in the delinquency area make great efforts to upgrade their skills.

In Texas adult probation officers and Texas Youth Council parole officers must also meet specific standards, including education in an accredited college or university plus two years of full-time employment in responsible probation and correctional work with juveniles or adults, social welfare work, teaching or personnel work; or be persons who are licensed attorneys with experience in criminal law. For juvenile probation officers, these qualifications do not apply. They should.

6. *Jurisdiction of delinquency cases should be placed in the district court or a division of the district court.*

Hal Robbins or "Stormy" Winters might not understand the wording of the above recommendation, but they would certainly understand that what happened to them in a court was of prime importance. In Texas, the Juvenile Court Act is less than 60 years old, having been established in 1907. Since that time, each Texas county has a court which serves as a juvenile court, but it might be any one of these five: county, district, domestic, juvenile, or probate.

Most of the counties studied utilize the county courts. Although most of these courts have conscientious judges, they do not have the prestige, status, and financial support given the district courts. In fact, as the Junior

[3] Juvenile Delinquency. A Report on State Action and Responsibilities. Council of State Governments, 1962.

League members interviewed judges, they frequently heard the comment that special juvenile courts should be given exclusive jurisdiction of delinquents.

7. *The state should develop a uniform system for the collection of all necessary statistics relating to delinquency from each of the 254 counties.*

In order to solve any problem, one needs to know precisely what the problem is. In order to see the total problem of juvenile delinquency in Texas, a person needs comparable records and figures. They are not available since different methods and systems are used by various counties, thus making data difficult to compare.

As stated by the Governor's Conference Committee on Juvenile Delinquency:

> the state should assume primary responsibility for establishing uniform definitions and suitable statistical reporting procedures for data on law enforcement, probation, detention, institutional and aftercare services, and the courts, and . . . the state should collect and compile such data on a regular basis and make them available to other states and to national agencies and organizations.[4]

The Junior League study showed that some counties in the state do not maintain statistical records and others keep them incompletely.

Despite the fact that exact and comparable figures are not always available, it is true that delinquency was found in all areas of the state. Even rural communities, long considered "semi-immune," grew in delinquency statistics. For example, towns under 100,000 showed delinquency rates of 1969 per 1000; cities of 100,000 to 250,000, 3.724; and cities of 250,000, 3.255.

Good record-keeping comes second only to good services. In Texas the need for uniform statistical recording is quite apparent and should be met.

8. *A state committee should be appointed by the Governor to coordinate all planning, leadership, and services which contribute to the prevention, control, and treatment of delinquency. This committee could determine what is needed and initiate the required action.*

As life patterns become increasingly complex, the study and coordination of services become necessities. Work with juvenile delinquency attests to that fact. State-level committees appointed by the Governor served in other areas as study groups to review various methods and to propose new ones. They can evaluate the responsibilities of various agencies and organizations and can recommend new steps or combinations of others.

A "top view" of delinquency in the State of Texas can be made by a state committee. Appointment of such a group, then, becomes one of the prime recommendations. Delinquency is not just the concern of the young people

[4] Juvenile Delinquency. A Report on State Actions and Responsibilities. Council of State Governments, 1962.

themselves nor their families. Rather, it colors the whole stream of our community lives, touches each of us personally or financially, and becomes a challenge to us all.

PART IV

CITIZENS WHO ARE WELL INFORMED AND who care often provide potent weapons against poverty, injustice, and other social ills. The members of the Public Affairs Study Committee of the Junior Leagues of Texas are no exception. As they traveled hundreds of miles, visited county judges, surveyed facilities, spoke with other interested persons, they learned much about the varying programs in Texas and found out many ways in which imaginative work was being done.

For example, in one small South Texas community a dynamic judge and sheriff concern themselves with the problem of juvenile delinquency, even though there is no police department and no probation officer. When a youngster commits an anti-social act, the judge places him under the supervision of a responsible person, perhaps a doctor or minister or businessman, someone who can serve as a good role model for the young person. The "supervisor" works with the child and his family and reports back to the judge. This imaginative judge said to one of the Junior League members, "If we find a boy hunting on restricted property, we don't pick him up for trespassing—we find some place where he can hunt legally."

In another community, the investigator learned that there was almost no delinquency among the Negro population. In searching for reasons, she discovered that one Negro physician had taken the problem upon himself. He had spearheaded a community center, which provided study periods after school. Buses picked up the children. Counseling was provided to the youngsters needing it, and recreation facilities were available. Most of the funds are provided by the Negro community.

Still another judge, far-sighted and concerned, said, "Any city can form a volunteer group to work with delinquency. Every community has its share of interested, responsible citizens. Sometimes a boy needs someone just to take him fishing—or *care* about him. This also serves as a good way to acquaint the community with the problem." This same judge, in the

interview, expressed himself this way, "We take each child under our wing. I'd rather spend time with them and rehabilitate them than send them to a state training school."

A West Texas community took the problem of potential delinquents upon itself. The local school board would not incorporate a purely vocational school into the system; consequently, the local police association and several civic groups set up such a school which was operated with great success.

A South Texas chief of police held several public meetings for the purpose of informing the citizenry about community problems and the aims of the police force. He also went before the Student Council of the high school and held a frank discussion about their opinions on proper and improper methods of handling juvenile offenders. Records attest to the fact that his program was successful.

A Central Texas judge stated the problem as one which called for rehabilitation centers. He pointed out that if offenders are sent to training schools or detention centers or are on probation, they often need rehabilitating. Included in these services are psychiatric help (if necessary) and vocational education. The judge pointed out that in his experience if the juvenile returns to his same home environment without help, he often repeats his delinquency, or in an effort to get out of his home, marries too young and often goes on welfare.

Another judge has tried what he calls "beneficial punishment" that is helpful to both offenders and community. When some youngsters misbehaved in his community, this judge sent them for five Saturdays to a local Catholic home to work under the supervision of a priest. They learned to garden, paint, and repair buildings.

These are but a few of the "examples" brought back by the investigators. As they talked, listened and observed, they also thought of possibilities for improving the situation in Texas. In addition to the formalized eight recommendations which took top priority in the report, they added some personal observations and possibilities of their own. Some of them are as follows:

"Although we realize that in outlying communities it is not always feasible for judges to be lawyers, we felt that the person selected to perform such duties should at least have a period of orientation to acquaint him with the laws and suitable detention and punishment. In one case we found a man who was a rancher, interested and concerned but inexperienced, trying to cope with juvenile problems. This was not just an isolated case. . . ."

"Regional detention homes of very small size might be another consideration. Almost every judge deplored the two alternatives—state training school or own home environment. . . ."

"A number of pilot project ideas have presented themselves to us during

our study. In the area of correction, a residential center which would consist of small cottage-type buildings and which would have some connection with a pilot regional probation department might be effective."

"My ideal for this part of the state would be a central juvenile bureau which housed detention facilities, trained parole and probation personnel and a full-time juvenile judge to service all three counties. . . ."

The speckled quality of juvenile services in the State of Texas becomes apparent as one sees the needs in many counties, the adequacies in relatively few others, and the various ways of handling the problems. Officials range in attitude from the judges who appoint civic leaders to supervise and look after the youngsters to one who says in part, "Juvenile offenders should be kept in jail on weekends."

Facilities vary as widely as do the opinions of the officials. In some parts of the state juvenile judges, detention homes, probation, and case work services form a protective wall within which a young person can often function in an acceptable manner. In others, overworked officials and non-existent facilities force youngsters into a continuous stream of delinquent behavior or commitment to a state training school.

With the dynamic concern of interested Texans, the eight recommendations can be implemented. Improved facilities can be provided. Preventive attention can be given. Rehabilitation services can be improved.

The family of Mark Miller, grieved by the freak accident which killed their son, knows that chance can often make the difference between life and death.

The father of "Stormy" Winters, bewildered by his defiant boy, now in a state training school, is beginning to learn, painfully, that an accident of geography may well have played a major part in whether "Stormy" followed a delinquent path to the training school or whether, with more parental responsibility and good preventive and rehabilitative services, he might have had a better chance for a productive life.

APPENDIX

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Some readers may be interested in the process involved in a statewide survey and the circumstances leading to Junior League participation. For their benefit, this section is devoted to a somewhat detailed description of the procedure.

Junior Leagues historically have been interested in the social, economic, cultural, educational and civic conditions in their communities. They have helped in establishing guidance centers, day nurseries, youth employment services and many other important community institutions. This considerable experience on a local level in social and welfare services resulted in the formation of a state committee to study public affairs vitally affecting the public welfare.

The first Junior League Public Affairs Study Committee in Texas (PASC) was formed to examine the problem of emotionally disturbed children. Following extensive work, the lack of facilities, services, and trained professionals in this field was graphically described to citizen-groups throughout the state, using a film specifically designed for the purpose, *Christina's Doll*, and Hogg Foundation publications, *No Place for Tommy* and *Children of the Evening*, based on the study. Citizen action resulted in the establishment of a state child psychiatry unit, as well as renewed interest in communities in guidance centers, counseling services and pilot projects to experiment with special education classes for emotionally disturbed children.

Encouraged by widespread response to their statewide education campaign on behalf of services for emotionally disturbed children, PASC members in November of 1961 agreed to undertake a like project: to upgrade the state's handling of youthful offenders apprehended by the law. Backed by the recommendations of several Texas foundations, the PASC delegate convention, held that year in Fort Worth, voted unanimously to undertake a thorough study of the situation known as juvenile delinquency.

In Texas, certainly, this decision promised something new under the sun. Even among informed persons, sure knowledge was fragmentary and piecemeal, means for data-collection were nonexistent, and ignorance was sublime. The PASC study proposed to shed more light on the situation in order that community and state leaders could get a clearer look at it. The study was to be designed and then carried through, not by an operational task-force of seasoned professionals under an experienced admin-

istrator, but by a somewhat motley aggregate of volunteers, inexperienced in the field of juvenile delinquency—with only a high degree of interest and willingness to recommend them for such a task. Careful foresight might have militated against the project—but unrepentant hindsight now justifies that 1961 decision, as will be shown.

During 1962, a number of knowledgeable people were contacted, including probation officers and judges: Dr. Harold Goolishian, Director of the Psychology Department of The University of Texas Medical Branch; and Mr. Don Rademacher, Director of the Texas Division of the National Council on Crime and Deliquency (NCCD), all of whom were asked for guidelines and suggestions for methods of approach to such a multifaceted problem.

Mr. Rademacher, meeting in San Antonio with the PASC at their annual session in November of 1962, suggested that the most pressing need was a detailed inventory of juvenile court services in all 254 counties of Texas. He set out a practical method for doing a county-by-county survey to compile such an inventory.

The PASC membership is made up of a very small number of members from each League, with some Leagues having only one person serving on this committee. Others had two or as many as ten. To cover 254 counties looked like a gigantic assignment. Ten Leagues, using a cadre of 30 volunteers, agreed to undertake such a survey, with the cooperation of the NCCD, and several months were spent in the preparation of survey forms designed specifically for the use of a group of volunteers.

In April, 1963, the Leagues began a trial run in their own and in one or two adjacent counties. Judges, probation officers, case workers, and in most cases, law enforcement officials, were personally interviewed in 23 counties. Statistics were obtained on the number of children handled, officially and unofficially; the types of courts; individual case-loads; the disposition of cases, and many other facts which were thought to be important.

Mr. Rademacher made a preliminary evaluation of the trial run of the survey, and brought the results to the Committee's 1963 annual meeting. The trial run proved to be even more successful than had been anticipated. Cooperation of the officials in every surveyed county was 100 per cent, a phenomenal return, far higher than in previous surveys conducted by the NCCD, when questionnaires had been mailed to officials. Some unexpected but very heartening results began to show. In two instances, encouraged by citizen interest in what they were doing, the county officials began exercising greater initiative. In one county, brushing provincialism aside, the officials asked to visit the advanced program in a neighboring county to gather new ideas on what improvements they might effect in their own bailiwick. At the time of the survey, this county had no probation officer and opined that none was needed, since the judge "could handle everything himself." Another county agreed to cooperate in a re-

search project, even though this would cost staff time and a considerable expenditure of money.

Much time and careful planning went into this survey. Judges were phoned several days in advance, and were asked for interviews of 30 minutes. But the usual outcome was that a judge kept the interviewer more than an hour, and sometimes spent the entire morning talking at length, sometimes kindly and sometimes acidly, about programs in his community and the state. In addition to the fact-finding, there were serious discussions with experts in the field of delinquency, such as Philip Green, head of the Juvenile Delinquency Department of the U.S. Children's Bureau. Methods of delinquency prevention and control in other states and in other countries were studied. Volunteers sat in on court hearings, visited jails, detention homes and the state training schools at Gatesville and Gainesville.

Many books and pamphlets on delinquency were studied. One of the most helpful books was *Kids, Crime and Chaos,* by Roul Tunley, a provocative overview of juvenile delinquency throughout the world.

The volunteer had a thorough understanding of her job, and was completely at home with official jargon before she ever called on a judge. Such terms as "recidivism," "epidemiology," "ethnic group" and "subculture" became a part of her vocabulary. She understood the difference between an official and an unofficial case, and knew what a prehearing report was. (She sometimes found that the officials did not.) She understood the function of probation as opposed to parole. She was prepared to listen intelligently and with understanding as an official talked about his local situation. And even more important, she went with specific and deliberate intent not to inject her own preconceived ideas into the interview. She was not there to espouse her own viewpoint or offer suggestions or criticisms. She was there to learn and to gather available statistics.

The response of the officials was most gratifying, especially in the opinion of people practiced in the business of surveying. Judges and probation officers, pressed for time in their ordinary tasks, put aside their work and spent hours in conversation with the Junior League members. Five different questionnaires were used, some of them two pages long. All questions were discussed with the officials, but generally it was left to an already busy courthouse employee to provide the statistical data, a time-consuming job.

Some counties were so remote from any participating League that it was impractical for League members to reach them. In such instances the assistance of the Texas Department of Public Welfare, Child Welfare Division was gratefully accepted. Miss Rosalind Giles, head of the Child Welfare Division, assigned her local workers to do the interviewing.

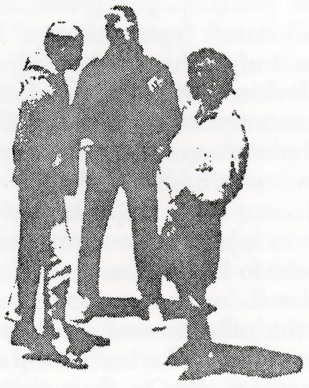
A few counties, where it was not practicable for either a Junior League or Child Welfare worker to conduct a personal interview, were contacted

only by telephone or mail. (Some of these counties did not return the questionnaires, again pointing up the importance of the personal interview.)

In only two counties were interviews refused.

Though reports were not available from all 254 Texas counties, the percentage of completed questionnaires is so extraordinarily high that experts deem it one of the most successful and comprehensive delinquency surveys ever conducted in Texas.

Mrs. Christopher Morris



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